Former Allende Aide Killed in Argentina

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By Joseph Novitski

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BUENOS AIRES, Sept. 30—Carlos Prats Gonzalez, who had been the commanding general of the Chilean army under the late President Salvador Allende, was killed here early this morning by a terrorist bomb that also killed his wife, Carmen Sofia.

The bomb exploded in or under Gen. Prats' car shortly after 1 a.m. in front of the apartment building where Prats, 59, and his wife had lived since the chilean military overthrew Allende and his leftist government last year. The couple had returned from a party and stopped their car at the door to the apartment building garage. The bomb or grenade blast shattered the car and blew out all the windows in three apartment buildings for six stories above the quiet, residential street.

There was no evidence to indicate who might have been behind Prats' assassination, although suspicion immediately fell on the right-wing terrorist group that calls itself the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance. It has claimed responsibility for seven killings and several bombings in the wave of terorism that has torn Argentina since July.

There was also a possibility that Chileans might have been behind the bombing. Another army general who supported Allende's right to assume office was killed by young rightists in a bungled kidnap attempt in 1970.

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Associated Press

Carlos Prats died in blast near Buenos Aires home

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There are extremists in Chile who still condemn Prats and look on his service as interior minister in the Allende government from October 1972 through March 1973 as evidence of leftist sympahties. His participation in the Cabinet was authorized by the officer corps, however, as an attempt to give the government a nonpolitical tone at a time of national crisis.

Prats commanded the Chilean army, keeping it out of politics during the bitterly polarized Allende years, until he retired under pressure from the officer corps a month before the coup of Sept. 11, 1973. His resignation, in a sense, cleared the way for the coup when Gen. Augusto Pinochet now president of the ruling military Junta, succeeded Prats as commander-in-chief of the army. Pinochet recently declared that he and a group of high-ranking officers had been conspiring for eight months before the coup to overthrow Allende.

There was never any hint that Prats had participated in the coup. On the contrary, the Chilean left considered him their strongest guarantee that the army, the key to power in Chile, would stay within the bounds of its constitutionally defined role and obey the elected president. A few days after the coup, there were rumors in Santiago and abroad that Prats was leading forces loyal to Allende against the new Junta in a march from southern Chile.

The reports were not true, and Prats was allowed to leave Chile for exile in Argentina shortly after the coup. He drove over the Andes to Mendoza, Argentina, and subsequently got a job as an executive in the Fate tire manufacturing company in Buenos Aires.

It is widely believed in Chile that Gen. Pinochet was behind both the drive into exile and Gen. Prats' subsequent employment in a comfortable job here.

Dispatches from Santiago today quoted Gen. Pinochet as condemning the terrorist bombing and lamenting Prats' death. Col. Pedro Ewing, secretary general of the Chilean junta, told reporters in Santiago that Prats' body might be flown back to Chile where it would be given the honors due a general in a military funeral. The Prats's three daughters still live in Chile.

Prats, a short, erect man with a florid face, never spoke talked with foreign journalists out against the coup led by his fellow officers. He occasionally here, until the middle of this year, but never criticized the Chilean junta.

Special correspondent Marlise Simons reported the following from Mexico City:

A close friend of Prats said that he had been working on his memoirs during his stay in Argentina.

The friend said that Prats told him he had received information about a plan to kill him. The former Chilean general told his friend that he assassination attempt would be planned to look like the work of the Argentine Anti-Communits Alliance.

Prats' friend said the former general had made no political statements while he was in Argentina and had no Argentine enemies.

Instead, the friend said, Prats believed that his enemies, if any, would be Chileans or Americans who were aware that Prats knew a great deal about the preparations for the Chilean coup.